



■ CHAUSSE: Sally Foss-Hawke (left) and Ruth Miller at the Chausse Fair in Stow-on-the-Wold



■ HORSE SKILLS: A rider shows off his horsemanship



CHASSE: Visitors to the fair

When traditions collide

IT'S like a scene from a period drama. Gipsy caravans on the moorland, old women stirring a cauldron on an open fire, men riding bareback. Could this be the Cotswolds?

It is. This is a fair that has existed for 100 years, but the gypsies have a tradition which some traditions in Stow-on-the-Wold would prefer to end.

For those who know the language of expressos and posy sellers, they sleep up shop and stay at home. But what would the history-conscious men and women want with the extraordinary range of trilly ruffious clothes and eccentric techniques which the gypsies bring to town?

But for the gypsies the antique shops, wine bars and delis are just the stuff of home-trading and nonsense philanthropy.

The event which took place last May prompted a public meeting at which gypsypunks spoke out against partying, loud music and rowdy behaviour in the village centre. Most of the discussions focused on their right to work. The sign on their doors said 'working or working up to the moment'. Some employed staff stood guard at their door.

Chairman Peter Shobley said: 'It's wrong that the town should banish diversions because it's just those traders have been shut for three days.'

■ By CAROLINE FINCH

'There are still a lot of tourists about. What do they think if the town is shut?'

Tradition is in a position with a range of attitudes: 'We're doing it - we shouldn't be banning that sort of behaviour.'

'It's the younger travellers who I think people need to guard against. It's really up to the senior gypsies to sort this out.'

Antique dealer Anthony Pashot felt the event had disgraced him.

He said: 'The reputation of the fair is terrible, but it's got to go on. We've tried to ban it but have been an unwilling participant.'

'I should go to a garage fair where, such as a supermarket or Matalan. There you can't control.'

'Lots of kids may come' - looking for things to pilfer and a lot of these shops have suffered.'

A tea-shop manager, who didn't wish to be named, said:

'The gypsies are a late late-nighters. In Stow-on-the-Wold there aren't police stations. There are lots of the Squares, Broad Street and High Street which are deserted.'

Worries described as a 'marketing' paper had avoided it from the town for gipsy fairgoers. As he did a deal over a memory snap:

'How many visitors are there? During the day there are lots of people around. At night it's a bit more like this.'

Closed

Barbara, the fair gatherer in a collection of a hundred or so stalls, said: 'I've got to get used to the library closure.'

'It's a bit of a non-agency festival so it still gets people coming round, but they wouldn't know it's a town of people,' he said.

'We've looked upon as the bane of the town. But the gypsies had given us a bit of a boost. We've got Christmas decorations from them. They've given us a bit of a kick up the backside. It's not like what's going on.'

'It's important to be in Stow because of our Chausse. It's keeping the old traditions alive.'

Chairwoman Julie Heslop from Stow said: 'I feel very strongly we should keep it going.'

'People talk about groups of people, but you get them in the moorland or the middle of nowhere where no one was had time alone.'

Peter Pashot, from Antiques, said he would discuss his views - along with the thoughts of other visitors the fair attracts.

He added: 'Tradition shut up shop all over the country because of gipsy fairs, but it won't stop on. This is where it belongs.'

The only local police force enough to handle law breakers is the gipsy to Stow-on-the-Wold and Stow-on-the-Wold have joined. Very few word, when in action a shotgun

"It's wrong that the town should batten down its hatches twice a year. There are still a lot of tourists about. What do they think if the town is shut?"

Shopkeeper Peter Shobley

He said: 'It's racial to shut the shops and it causes ill behaviour. I have no trouble at all and treat people equally.'

'Sometimes there are a few kids with attitude, but you can usually cope with it. The fair is a tradition we should be proud of. It makes Stow unique and has gone on the last 100 years.'

'It's very important for the Romany people. They've had to settle as their children can be educated but they need these fairs to show maintain their traditional way of life.'



■ TRADITIONALS



■ PURRSPECTIVE: Matthew and Lucy with a kitten



■ HOOPEY POWER: A doggy demonstration



LAST FOOD ORDERS
WED-FRI: 12.30pm-2.30pm
SAT: 12.30pm-2.30pm
SUN: 12.30pm-2.30pm
Dominington Alice

When traditions collide

IT'S like a scene from a period drama. Gipsy caravans on the roadside. Old women stirring a cauldron on an open fire. Men riding bareback. Could this be the Cotswolds?

It is. Twice a year. For more than 100 years. But the ancient gipsy fair is a tradition which some traditionalists in Stow-on-the-Wold would prefer to end. Far from welcoming the cavalcade of caravans and pony traders, they shut up shop and stay at home.

For what would 21st century Cotswold man and woman want with the extraordinary range of frilly cushion covers and plastic bathtubs which the gipsy fraternity seem to love?

Not for the gipsies the antique shops, wine bars and delicatessen. Just the stuff of horse trading and caravan paraphernalia.

The event which took place last May prompted a public meeting at which shopkeepers spoke out against petty theft, intimidation and aggression from gangs of youths. Most of the shopkeepers closed on fair day this week. The sign on their doors said stocktaking or refurbishment was the reason. Some employed staff to stand guard at their front door.

Outfitter Peter Shelley said: "It's wrong that the town should batten down its hatches twice a year. Some traders have been shut for three days.



PURRFECT: Matthew and Leo with a kitten

HORSE POWER: a buggy demonstration

■ By CAROLINE FISHER

"There are still a lot of tourists about. What do they think if the town is shut?"

"There certainly is a problem with gangs of youths intimidating shop staff - we shouldn't be having that sort of behaviour."

"It's the younger travellers which people need to guard against. It's really up to the senior gypsies to sort this out."

Antique dealer Anthony Preston felt the event had outgrown Stow.

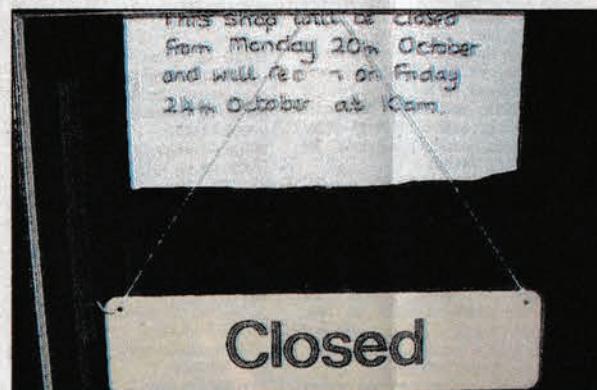
He said: "The tradition of the fair is laudable, but it's got nothing to do with Stow and has become an anomaly."

"It should go to a purpose-built place, such as a compound or Moreton Showground, where it's easier to control."

"Lots of kids run around looking for things to pilfer and a lot of food shops have suffered."

A tea shop manager, who didn't wish to be named, said: "The gypsies are a law unto themselves. It doesn't matter how many police are around. They go into The Square, drink lager and chuck cans around."

Being described as a pilfering, lager lout couldn't be further from the truth for gipsy David Rawlings as he did a deal over a canary cage.



For him, the Stow gathering is a celebration of a disappearing way of life. And in 33 years he's got used to the frosty welcome.

"If this was a non-gipsy festival you'd still get people causing trouble, but they wouldn't blame it on a race of people," he said.

"We're looked upon as the lowest of the low. But for every bad gipsy you get 20 good. We have a Christian meeting here and hundreds of travellers have given their life to the Lord and don't like what's going on."

"Yet it's important to be in Stow because of our Charter. It's keeping the old traditions alive."

Chicken seller John Bowdler, from Derby, said: "I feel very strongly we should keep it going. It's our fair."

"People talk about gangs of youths, but you get them in Birmingham or the middle of Derby where my son had his tyres slashed."

Paul Price, from Leicestershire, said he would always keep coming - along with the thousands of other visitors the fair attracts.

He added: "Traders shut up shop all over the country because of gipsy fairs, but it won't stop us. This is where it belongs."

The only local person brave enough to throw her hand in with the gipsies is former Stow Mayor and Gipsy Council vice-president Vera Norwood, who is also a shopkeeper.

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Shopkeeper Peter Shelley

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